

**America's First Cold War Army
1945–1950**

by

William W. Epley

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Foreword

On the eve of the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the Korean War, it seems entirely appropriate that this insightful 1993 AUSA Land Warfare Paper be reprinted. The performance of the United States Army in the opening months of the Korean War revealed significant training and structural weaknesses. That ghastly ordeal showed that the Army was not prepared mentally, physically or materially, for a “come-as-you-are” war. This reprint will serve as a reminder to all of us that there must be no repeat of this lesson of history.

How had such degradation taken place only five short years after the very successful conclusion of World War II? As this study of America’s first Cold War Army illustrates, part of the answer certainly lies in major changes in post-war defense policy and budgets, including the fundamental and far-reaching reorganization of the defense establishment. For the first time in American history, the armed services were organized in one establishment. Such reorganization was complicated by vexing problems in demobilizing one army and rebuilding an entirely new peacetime army. Given the desire of the nation to return to normalcy after the tumultuous years of the Second World War, the momentum for these development was beyond the direct influence of the Army. The Cold War had not yet developed fully enough for the nation’s leaders to recognize the extent of the potential threat, and to prepare properly.

The post-Cold War era is now a decade old. Today’s Army has faced and mastered many new and varied missions in these past ten years. Success in these operations has been achieved in an era of decreasing budgets and a downsizing Army. Offsets to such diminishment have been achieved through rigorous training and sought through an emphasis on modernization. In part, this is because we as professionals remember the lessons of history and the opening months of the Korean War.

This Land Warfare Paper, reminding us all of the events and policies of the five years before the Korean War, is again dedicated to the veterans of the U.S. Army who fought in that war.

GORDON R. SULLIVAN
General, U.S. Army Retired
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August 1999

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Introduction

In July 1950, a small United States Army unit, Task Force Smith, deployed to Korea as the spearhead of the Army's first post-World War II force-projection effort. That effort ended in disaster as Task Force Smith failed to stop the North Koreans and was defeated in detail. The Army suffered heavy casualties in the summer of 1950 before it stabilized and eventually reversed its predicament in Korea. The defeat of Task Force Smith and other Army units in 1950 reflected much more than merely specific lapses of tactical proficiency. The defeat exposed the general failure of the Army to prepare itself for battle in peacetime during the five years since the end of World War II.

The United States Army had fought well in World War II and succeeded in simultaneously defeating two competent and determined enemies on separate fronts. After World War II, however, the Army underwent tremendous change and upheaval. Task Force Smith represented a vastly different Army from the Army of 1945. First and foremost, the Army was a significantly smaller force in 1950, only seven percent of its size in 1945. Yet it also represented the largest peacetime Army ever fielded up to that point, and benefited from the largest peacetime budgets ever. The Army had changed as well in another crucial aspect: It was the first conscripted peacetime force in U.S. history.

While the Army of 1950 underwent significant change after 1945, the legacy of World War II also remained strong. Many veterans of World War II remained in the ranks and its leadership, having directed the last war successfully, enjoyed immense prestige. Army leaders had mastered the complexities of modern warfare and knew how to mobilize and train for total war. Army equipment was generally modern and technically sophisticated. Furthermore, the Army was part of a new, unified defense establishment designed to ensure better cooperation among all the services. In short, Army leaders were solid professionals who knew what it took to maintain a trained and ready force.

Nevertheless, the welter of change and the issues confronting Army leaders after World War II obscured the need to maintain combat readiness. Army leaders faced a number of new and complex issues in the five years after the war. How the Army solved these issues had much to do with the performance of the initial units deployed to Korea in 1950. These issues included demobilization, the rebuilding of a new Army, doctrine and training policies, modernization and procurement policies, research and development policies, and officer education.

Demobilization and Plans for the Postwar Army

The most immediate issues confronting Army leaders after the Second World War were demobilization and planning the postwar military structure. These two issues were

inextricably linked. Demobilization involved discharging most of the eight million men inducted during the war. At some point, demobilization stopped and peacetime strength stabilized. The point at which this took place determined to a large extent the character of the peacetime Army up to the Korean War. Also, plans were needed to ensure a steady flow of recruits into the new peacetime military establishment. Finally, determination of an “end-point” peacetime strength also involved coherent integration of foreign policy goals and objectives which would ensure the national security interests of the United States.

Rapid demobilization and maintenance of a small peacetime force characterized the traditional American pattern after war. The experience after World War I was no different and had left a lasting impression on future Army leaders. Demobilization after that war was rapid, disorderly, and accomplished without regard to the size of the postwar Army. By June 1919, barely seven months after the armistice, the Army had discharged over 2.7 million men, leaving only 130,000 on active duty. The plan for the post-World War I Army was embodied in the National Defense Act of 1920, which had made provisions for a viable peacetime Regular Army of 280,000 and a strengthened Army National Guard and Reserve. The War Department had further proposed a universal military training (UMT) plan in 1919 as a solution to future mobilization. However, Congress and the administration did not provide the funds necessary to meet the goals of the National Defense Act of 1920 and never seriously considered UMT. As early as 1921, the Regular Army was reduced to one-half the size authorized. By 1927, the Army had reached its post-World War I nadir of 113,000. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the Regular Army never reached the goal, either in authorized strength or concept, outlined in the National Defense Act of 1920.¹

With that frustrating experience in mind, Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall was determined to have a well-planned and orderly demobilization following World War II. He recalled to active duty in February 1941 Brigadier General John McAuley Palmer, the War Department architect of the National Defense Act of 1920 and a respected policy thinker, as a special advisor on demobilization and the future postwar Army plans.² General Marshall also formed a new general staff section, called the Special Planning Division (SPD), in July 1943, and charged it with formulating plans for an orderly demobilization. Marshall appointed Brigadier General William F. Tompkins as the director of SPD.³

SPD faced immense tasks. Tompkins had two primary responsibilities: to plan for an orderly demobilization of a huge army that was still mobilizing for war, and to plan for the size of the postwar peacetime Army.⁴ These tasks were complicated by the small size and relative obscurity of SPD. For most of the war, SPD had only 20 officers, including Palmer, who was only attached to the section, and Tompkins. Palmer was the only officer in SPD with enough prestige to see General Marshall at any time. Aside from the smallness of SPD, its status as a special staff section rather than a general staff section hindered further coordination. In contrast, the Operations Division (OPD) on the War Department general staff, which served as Marshall’s command post during the war, had more than 200 officers. These included some of the Army’s most promising officers—OPD planners included, at various times, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Albert Wedemeyer, Thomas Handy, Charles H. Bonesteel and Dean Rusk—and they interacted with General

Marshall on a daily basis. OPD was responsible for the strategic direction of the war, and the imbalance reflected the compelling importance of planning and organizing for the prosecution of the war effort. However, the insignificance of SPD made planning, coordination, concurrences with other staff elements, and final approval of plans more difficult, and its small size relegated SPD to a role as a coordinator of plans rather than the true originator.

More importantly, however, SPD worked without the benefit of a national security strategy which integrated political or foreign policy goals with military policy. Once national security requirements were enunciated, a peacetime military force could be tailored to meet those requirements, and Congress, which would have to approve force levels, would be better able to understand the need for such forces. Formulating a national security strategy for the postwar era during the war was exceptionally difficult. Toward the end of the war in 1945, SPD did coordinate with OPD for guidance in this regard. Brigadier General George A. Lincoln, chief of the Policy and Strategy Section in OPD, observed that no study or methodology showed minimum requirements for satisfactory U.S. security after the war. Lincoln also noted the “lack of guidance” from the president, the State Department, or even the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) from which estimates could be formulated.⁵ Although the State, War and Navy Departments coordinated many postwar problems by means of the joint State–War–Navy Coordinating Committee, the Army never received any foreign policy guidance regarding U.S. interests or goals from which the size of peacetime military forces could be estimated. The committee had been formed in December 1944 but never provided the necessary foreign policy coordination, especially in the last hectic days of the war.⁶

An exchange of memoranda between Secretary of War Robert B. Patterson and Secretary of State James F. Byrnes in November 1945, two full months after the war, revealed the problem. Secretary Patterson described the rapid pace of demobilization. He needed “ultimate foreign policy objectives” to permit the War Department to plan for “occupational requirements and to determine the interim and ultimate size of the Army.”⁷ Secretary Byrnes replied that he was concerned that rapid demobilization would erode military capability but that it was “not possible to answer some of the questions which you put to me as definitely as both of us would desire.”⁸

General Marshall knew that the terms of the final peace settlements to be negotiated subsequent to the unconditional surrender of Germany and Japan would provide the basis for determining the strength of the regular or permanent postwar military forces. However, almost four years passed before definitive peace agreements were signed in 1949 and by then the international situation had changed significantly. Meanwhile, the lack of strong direction from the State Department in formulating postwar foreign policy compounded the Army’s problem of determining the size of the peacetime force.⁹

The SPD struggled to coordinate plans for demobilization and the postwar Army with these significant handicaps. Tompkins sent forward to the Secretary of War and the Army Chief of Staff three periodic status reports and monthly progress reports during the war. These reports were based on certain operating assumptions as well as on proposals for the end strength of the future peacetime Army, called the “troop basis.” Planning the troop basis was important. From the initial planning in 1943 until the end of the war, the War

Department and the SPD struggled to arrive at an agreeable level. The estimates of the basis were derived from strictly military analysis, without firm political guidance. General Marshall repeatedly rejected planning figures submitted by SPD because he thought the cost would be too high to win approval from Congress. Usually the planning figure fluctuated between 1.5 and 2.3 million men (for both Army and Army Air Force) in the active force. The lower figure, although never officially approved, became the accepted number by default in the four months after Japan surrendered. At that time, the War Department did not have an approved endstrength for the Army, which had begun a rapid demobilization.¹⁰

Although many of the assumptions of the wartime planning process changed, plans consistently assumed the need to institute a form of peacetime universal military training. Some form of UMT had always been favored by a significant portion of the officer corps since World War I,¹¹ and General Marshall was a strong advocate of the plan. UMT required all eligible males to undergo a period of military training and become part of a pool from which the Army could draw to maintain its peacetime strength as well as a substantial trained reserve. Such training had the wholehearted support of General Marshall, his successor as Army chief of staff, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, and many influential politicians, but still needed congressional approval.¹² Nevertheless, all planning for the peacetime Army until 1948 assumed that Congress would approve UMT.

The period of demobilization lasted from 1 September 1945 to 30 June 1947. During that time, the Army was reduced from more than eight million to a strength of 684,000 by 1 July 1947. The number of Army divisions fell from 89 in 1945, to 16 in June 1946, to 12 in June 1947. By 1948, there were only 10 divisions in the active Army. Unlike World War I where entire units were demobilized, World War II demobilization was accomplished through the discharge of individual soldiers. SPD had developed the separation plan during the war based on the adjusted service rating system which awarded points to individual soldiers for length of service, overseas service, combat duty, wounds, and dependent children. Soldiers with the highest number of points were discharged first. Total point levels for discharge were decided during the war. However, that plan had been devised mainly for a transitional period between Victory in Europe (V-E) Day and Victory in Japan (V-J) Day, thought to be about one year. When Japan suddenly surrendered in August 1945, less than four months after V-E Day, adjustments had to be made to discharge soldiers faster. This meant lowering the total point score for individual soldiers.

On 15 August 1945, General Marshall made demobilization the primary mission of the Army.¹³ As he expected, Congress and the American people clamored for rapid demobilization once the war ended. The War Department came under intense and immediate pressure—from Congress, the press, families, and the soldiers themselves—to release soldiers to return to civilian life. Appearing before Congress on 20 September 1945, Marshall emphasized that transportation facilities and the administrative capacity to handle the large number of men determined the rate of demobilization. He added that it had no relationship whatsoever to the size of the future Army.¹⁴

During the four months from September 1945 to January 1946, the Army discharged an average of 1.2 million soldiers per month. General Eisenhower, the new Army chief of staff, had realized in December 1945 that he needed to slow down the demobilization

because at the current rate of discharges, the Army could not carry out its occupation duties in Germany and Japan. In January 1946, Eisenhower approved a six-month transition from the point system to a two-year length-of-service discharge system. The transition to a length-of-service discharge system slowed the rate of demobilization. After 1 July 1946, all drafted enlisted men would be discharged after two years' service.¹⁵

General Marshall had approved a final concept for the postwar Army in November 1945, just before he retired. Now the Army had an approved target endstrength and at least a partial vision for the overall size. The concept was entitled, "The War Department Basic Plan for the Post War Military Establishment." SPD produced the plan, based on work by the War Department G-3 (Operations) and OPD.¹⁶ The plan called for military "adequacy" based on the nature of the postwar world, which it also recognized as undefined given the failure of the State Department, the president, or even the JCS to provide more specific guidance. Adequacy was defined vaguely as providing for security of the continental United States, supporting international obligations that the United States may assume, and holding strategic bases. It also called for an active and reserve end strength of 4.5 million men (Army and Army Air Force). While the plan itself went no further in the numerical breakdown of components, OPD had estimated that the minimum active component should be 1.55 million. This figure was used as the target troop basis for 1 July 1946.¹⁷ Like much of the earlier planning, the plan assumed the enactment of UMT to provide a steady source of manpower as well as a large reserve.

The War Department basic plan turned out to be too vague to serve as a blueprint for the future Army. The rush of events—in this case demobilization, the failure to adopt UMT by Congress, and the elimination of selective service—nullified the proposal. Few documents referred to the plan after it was published as War Department policy. Instead of considering problems that might invalidate it, the plan had optimistically assumed the adoption of UMT. Moreover, because of the failure to integrate national and foreign policy objectives into the plan, it also failed to provide an adequate vision for the postwar military establishment. However, the plan did fix an end-point troop basis that was useful for future analysis and established the principle of reviving the National Guard and Organized Reserves.

The impact of rapid demobilization on the Army's combat effectiveness was dramatic and disastrous. As Secretary of War Patterson noted in November 1945, the experience level fell throughout the Army. It would take months before the peacetime Army could be considered "an effective fighting force." He further noted that "our national commitments will continue without fully trained forces to implement them."¹⁸ The secretary understated the problem. The drain of experienced and trained soldiers destroyed combat effectiveness as divisions became, in effect, demobilization centers. The new Army chief of staff, General Eisenhower, more accurately portrayed the situation when he appeared before the House Committee on Military Affairs on 22 January 1946:

Under the point system, most of our noncommissioned officers, our specialists, have gone out, and units that we call units, are really not units—they are capable of only limited jobs we now give them, and in the technical sense, they are not capable of that.¹⁹

The case of the 91st Infantry Division illustrated the situation. Originally transferred from Italy after V-E Day to the west coast of the United States for future use against Japan, by November 1945 the division had about 2,100 soldiers left. It could not account for over 4,500 men who had been discharged en route. The heavy equipment of the division had been left in Europe. Like the 91st Division, many of the 89 divisions raised for the war simply disbanded without even a deactivation ceremony. As one demobilization study done by Sixth Army stated: "One of the worst aspects of the sudden dissolution was the fact that men who had worked and fought together had no further opportunity to cement that friendly relationship in final ceremonies. Magnificent esprit d'corps vanished into thin air."²⁰

The Army's equipment, which was the most modern in the world at the end of the war, fared no better during demobilization. General Eisenhower's testimony above only hints at the state of care given much of the equipment. Army records of November 1945 indicated worldwide equipment worth \$50 billion. Equipment worth \$18.5 billion sat unattended or poorly serviced in overseas theaters.²¹ In 1947, the Army had more than 370,000 unserviceable motor vehicles on its property books. Of more than 28,000 tanks left over at the end of the war, only 6,600 were deemed serviceable in 1950.²²

Personnel demobilization had highest priority. As a result, many skilled technicians in service units, as well as other soldiers, simply left their equipment to replacements and returned to civilian life. Beginning in January 1946, replacements had only eight weeks of basic training before deploying overseas, about half the training received by soldiers in World War II. Equipment care and maintenance in the hands of these new soldiers was problematic because they were much less well trained or skilled.

Simply put, Army equipment demobilization was executed hastily and with very little care. In aggregate, the Army did conserve enough of its material during demobilization to meet most of its active force requirements. However, equipment that could have been used to reequip the reserve components or preserved as a war reserve was either scrapped or sold as surplus. By 1950, the equipment that was available even for active Army training was often old and worn.²³

The Army's role in equipment demobilization focused on determining the types and numbers of equipment that could be declared excess. For the Army, it was difficult to know which equipment to save for future use when it could not accurately project its own peacetime size or structure. By early 1946, the victorious Army that had won a global war had vanished; it simply did not exist in terms of combat power. The soldiers who had fought and won that war went home. A new era had begun and a completely new peacetime Army had to be built.

Maintaining the Army's Strength

Maintaining consistent strength levels challenged the Army throughout the five years from 1945 to 1950. Army strength stood at 684,000 at the end of demobilization in July 1947, over 100,000 below congressional authorization. In 1948, Army strength had shrunk to 538,000. In 1949, it was back up to 651,000, only to shrink back to 591,000 the following year at the start of the Korean War. The Army never met congressionally authorized endstrengths. The fluctuations in Army strength not only affected training and

combat readiness but also reflected the inability of Army leaders to provide a consistent vision for the size and shape of the Army.

The Selective Service Act of 1940, as amended, remained in effect through 1946, and with the draft and voluntary enlistments the Army was able to meet a targeted endstrength in 1947, albeit with considerable difficulty. The problem of supplying overseas replacements was particularly acute. Because of the high discharge rates in overseas commands, the War Department reduced the basic training cycle for recruits from 17 to 13 weeks and finally to eight weeks in January 1946. The reduction in basic training affected equipment readiness, but beyond that, it meant that the United States was using soldiers with as little as two months' training to support ill-defined foreign policy objectives.

Nevertheless, a surprisingly large number of volunteers joined the Army in the months after the war. From September to December 1945, more than 400,000 volunteered for the Army while only 130,000 were drafted. The War Department had embarked on an aggressive recruitment campaign because selective service was scheduled to end in May 1946 and the legislative fate of UMT remained uncertain. The War Department had pinned its hopes on UMT but it understood that it might be some time before Congress would enact the necessary legislation. The high rate of enlistments continued through 1946 and was sufficient so that draft calls through the latter part of that year were either low or canceled.

The War Department was still concerned that it could not meet manpower requirements for overseas commitments. Secretary of War Patterson asked Congress for an extension of the Selective Service Act in May and June 1946. At first, Congress balked at the extension, hoping to induce the War Department to adopt a voluntary program. Patterson pleaded for an extension of selective service, listing occupation duties in Europe, Japan and Korea that required a minimum force of 1.55 million on 1 July 1946 and 1.07 million on 1 July 1947 for both the Army and Army Air Force. Congress passed the extension 24 hours before the draft was set to expire, but for only eight months. At the same time, Congress mandated the endstrengths which Patterson had described. This was the first time Congress had mandated endstrengths since before the war.

Volunteer enlistments remained high for 1946. An unprecedented peacetime number of more than one million men had volunteered between 1 September 1945 and 1 October 1946. Enlistments continued to be high in the first few months of 1947, and the War Department declined to issue any draft calls in January, February and March 1947. Given the remarkable response of volunteers and the hope that UMT would be adopted, the War Department did not ask for another extension when the Selective Service Act expired on 31 March 1947. The last draftee had left the Army by 30 June 1947, ending the official period of demobilization. The United States Army was a all-volunteer force through all of 1947 and the first part of 1948.²⁴

Manpower problems began when the Selective Service Act expired. Enlistments began to drop off immediately. In the spring of 1947, General Jacob L. Devers, Commanding General, Army Ground Forces, stated in a recruiting appeal that the Army "was getting only 20,000 a month" when it needed 30,000.²⁵ The Army waged an intensive recruiting campaign, assisted by national advertising experts. High-ranking former wartime leaders

and heroes such as Lieutenant General J. Lawton Collins, General Devers and Lieutenant General Ira C. Eaker went before executives of the newspaper, wire service, radio, magazine and motion picture industries to promote voluntary enlistments, mainly through an appeal to patriotism and service.²⁶ No attempt, however, was made to attract volunteers through increased pay, and it was doubtful that Congress and the President were in the mood to spend the money for such a purpose. Without the spur of the draft, voluntary enlistments began to fall off. By 30 June 1947, the War Department was approximately 100,000 short of its authorized strength of 1.07 million. The Army portion of that figure was 684,000. One year later, on 30 June 1948, the Army reached its postwar nadir of 538,000.²⁷

While the Army vigorously pursued voluntary recruitment, the War Department continued to view UMT as the panacea for its manpower problems. UMT had the strong support of Marshall, Eisenhower and President Truman. However, while UMT bills were introduced in Congress in 1947 and President Truman made a direct appeal to Congress in 1948, there was never any real support in Congress. The price tag of \$2 billion was a major reason.²⁸ Beyond that, Congress assumed that the days of the mass armies were gone.²⁹ Many in Congress felt that a large standing Army was not needed because of our powerful Air Force and our monopoly on nuclear weapons. So Congress did not adopt UMT in 1947 or 1948. However, in response to strong arguments of Army commitments overseas and a continual shortfall of manpower, Congress revived the draft for a two-year period under the Selective Service Act of 1948, approved 24 June 1948.

Unification of the Armed Forces

The momentum for service “unification” grew out of the successful wartime experiences with interservice cooperation between the Army and Navy, of which the organization of the wartime Joint Chiefs of Staff was perhaps the best example.³⁰ General Marshall had strongly endorsed the principle of unification and there was widespread sentiment for it within the Army. There also was widespread agreement within both the military and civilian leadership on the general need for postwar organizational reform of the military. However, the unification debate from 1945 to 1949 revealed deep philosophical differences and suspicions between the Army and Navy and between their supporters in Congress. The Navy especially had serious reservations, believing it had a peculiar mission and strategic problems not likely to receive adequate recognition in a unified command structure. The Navy also feared its air arm and Marines were likely to be given short shrift in an organization dominated by the Army and Air Force. Above all, the debates involved the issues of service roles and missions and implicitly, the types and kinds of weapons each would control, especially nuclear weapons.³¹ The National Security Act of 1947 was a compromise which embodied a federal system rather than the truly unified one advocated by the Army. The Air Force became an independent service apart from the Army. The amendments in 1949 strengthened the role of the Secretary of Defense and correspondingly downgraded the service departments.³²

The National Security Act of 1947 made the Air Force an independent service but did not ensure interservice cooperation and unity of command. While the services retained a degree of independence under the original legislation, the 1949 amendment required the

new Department of Defense to submit one defense budget to Congress for scrutiny. In 1950, for the first time, the Army's budget request went to Congress as part of the overall defense budget. Additionally, the debates over unification had consumed a significant portion of the time and energy of the Army leadership at a time when the Army was attempting to rebuild and provide for military government and occupation forces in Japan and Germany. Officers of stature, among them Lieutenant General Collins and Major General Lauris Norstad, concentrated on legislative issues concerning unification when critical decisions about the Army's size and shape remained unclear.³³

Nevertheless, in 1949, the Army became a part of a semiunified defense establishment in which its needs were considered as part of the nation's total military requirements. At best, the Army's needs during this period came out second to those of the Air Force and were further degraded by the fiscal restrictions of a government desiring a return to peacetime normality. At the same time, the National Security Act of 1947 also created the National Security Council, a much-needed forum in which foreign policy objectives could be integrated with military strategy.

Strategic Discourse and Estimates of the Threat, 1945–1950

At the close of World War II, the State Department was cautiously optimistic that U.S. differences with the Soviet Union would eventually be resolved in a peaceful and reasonable manner. In particular, the nation's political leaders had placed great faith in the new United Nations to help preserve peace.³⁴ But the defeat and collapse of the Axis Powers had fundamentally changed the character of international relations and created a power vacuum which only the United States could fill. The transition from prewar isolationism to postwar superpower was not easy for the United States. Throughout the next five years, from 1945 to 1950, the United States moved cautiously to fill that vacuum by opposing Soviet moves in Iran, Greece and Berlin. By 1949, it was clear that a Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, characterized by political confrontation short of war, had developed. Militarily, the United States had no threat to its security in 1945. By early 1950, the threat had materialized in the form of the Soviet Union.³⁵ How to respond to the threat was the primary question facing military and political leaders from 1948 through 1950.

The integration of military and foreign policy was still at an infant stage. Congress and the administration agreed on military force levels and policies that could not fully support their political objectives, interests and commitments around the world.³⁶ Reflecting on his years as Secretary of State, General Marshall summarized this dilemma:

I remember being pressed constantly to . . . give the Russians hell . . . I was getting the same appeal to the Far East and China. At that time, my facilities for giving them hell—and I am a soldier and know something about the ability to give hell—was 1-1/3 divisions over the entire United States. That is quite a proposition when you deal with somebody with over 260 [divisions] and you have 1-1/3.³⁷

Part of the reason for the gap between goals and the ability to carry them out was infatuation with airpower and the U.S. monopoly on nuclear weapons. Some politicians and military leaders, such as Senator Robert Taft and General Carl Spaatz, thought the

next war would be a world war in which air power would play a decisive role.³⁸ The next war would come suddenly, without warning, placing a premium on standing military forces, particularly air forces. No thought was given to the possibility of a limited war. Indeed, the whole concept of UMT, from the Army's viewpoint, was to provide a mass Army which could mobilize quickly for total war, but only after the Air Force had inflicted massive damage on the enemy. This meant a relatively small standing Army and a large Air Force. This strategy, based primarily on airpower, was essentially isolationist, "a Fortress America" concept.³⁹ A mighty Air Force equipped with nuclear weapons could deter the Soviets and was far less expensive than a large standing Army.

The Army, preoccupied with overseas occupation missions and rebuilding, also contributed to the vision of future war and the need for forces in being. The tone had been set out in 1945 in the War Department basic plan. "For purposes of planning," the document stated, "it will be assumed that for the next war, the actual attack will be launched upon the United States without any declaration of war; that the initial attack will represent an all-out effort on the part of the enemy; that the war will develop into a total war."⁴⁰ Brigadier General Lincoln, deputy director of plans and operations in 1947, testified before Congress during the fiscal 1948 budget hearings that "we will not have the time to mobilize we had from 1939 onward. Adequate forces in readiness must be immediately available and there may be very little warning."⁴¹ This view was echoed throughout the Army. An Army Ground Forces study in 1947 assumed that the next war would be "total," with no restrictions on weapons. The initial role of the Army would be to assist the civilian population and repel the ground attack. Implicit in such thinking was the expectation that a first attack would be conducted by air.⁴² This Army view of the next war nicely complemented that of the airpower advocates and implicitly undercut Army plans for a large ground force. It also had important implications for Army training philosophy because airpower would provide time for training and mobilization. In short, the Army would not be committed into direct combat in the opening phases of the next war. Therefore, it did not need a high degree of readiness.

The United States armed services in general had regarded the Soviet Union in 1945 as no immediate threat to the United States. Over the next two years, however, the services slowly began to see the Soviet Union as the major threat to the United States. The Army Ground Forces, responsible for training and doctrine in the continental United States, explicitly listed the Soviet Union as the most likely enemy as early as 1947.⁴³ In broader terms, however, there was no attempt to define the need to confront the Red Army with a ground army. Despite the fact the Army had identified the next potential enemy, it did not bring itself to terms with the eventuality of fighting with a mass army against the Red Army in Europe. It thought only in terms of defending the continental United States. The Army Ground Forces, responsible for reinforcement of Europe and Japan with the General Reserve in the event of an emergency, did not tailor training and doctrine to confront a Soviet-style Red Army.⁴⁴ Implicit in this planning was the reliance on the Air Force and perhaps nuclear weapons to deal with that threat.

The Army Rebuilds: The Initial Postwar Budgets

The turmoil of the demobilization, the unification of the armed forces, and the lack of firm politico-strategic guidance greatly hampered the initial attempts of the Army to reorganize for peacetime. The initial postwar budgets exacerbated the difficulty. In the midst of demobilization, the War Department submitted its first peacetime budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 1947 (1 July 1946–30 June 1947). Secretary of War Patterson emphasized the priority of the occupation mission in Germany and Japan in his presentation to Congress. He requested \$7.1 billion. Congress actually approved \$7.3 billion, with the Army portion amounting to \$5.3 billion. Of this figure, about half was for personnel pay. Together with the Navy's \$4.3 billion, the service departments' \$11.6 billion was considerably smaller than the \$80 billion appropriated in the last year of the war, FY 1946. Congress also gave Patterson the strength levels he requested; for the Army this was 790,000. By the end of the fiscal year and because of the demobilization turmoil, Army strength stood at 684,000 and 12 divisions, approximately 100,000 short of the authorized number. Over half the budget was for pay, none for procurement, and most of the remainder was spent on occupation requirements.⁴⁵

While the first peacetime budget after World War II was considerably smaller than that of the last year of the war, it was still more than five times larger than the last full peacetime budget submitted before the war. The FY 1939 War Department budget was just over \$1 billion, and the strength of the Army (and Army Air Corps) was 187,893.⁴⁶ However, the differences between these two peacetime budgets were not lost on Congress when Secretary Patterson underscored the Army's role in overseas occupation missions. For this initial peacetime budget, the lawmakers approved everything requested and more. But there was also significant support for keeping Army expenditures low, and this sentiment was reflected in succeeding budgets. These future budgets more closely resembled the prewar approach to appropriations.

The FY 1948 federal budget reflected the desire of President Truman and Congress to concentrate on economic growth, social programs and, above all, the reduction of the \$275 billion federal debt incurred during the war. These priorities resulted in an even smaller Army budget of \$4.6 billion for FY 1948. The budget set a new authorized Army strength limit at 667,000. One year later, in June 1948, because of the failure to adopt UMT and the declining recruitment for the all-volunteer Army, actual strength stood at 538,000 and ten divisions. Four of these divisions were in Japan, one and one-third were in Germany, two in Korea, and three in the United States.⁴⁷ According to the Army Chief of Staff, General Eisenhower, "Dollars currently allotted to the Army are not military dollars, pure and simple, to be employed for the construction of defenses or the increase of our war potential." Eisenhower continued that "the budget of the Army and its numerical strength are devoted largely to the consequences of victory—to the opportunity afforded by victory to build a peaceful way of life in two areas of the world. . . . Occupation is both worthy and necessary, but it must be seen as preventative rather than positive security."⁴⁸

FY 1948 was a critical year in the rebuilding of the Army, and the financial reality greatly hampered that effort. The new budget immediately affected the Army. Overall equipment requirements for combat units were reduced to 80 percent. Cuts in equipment

maintenance funds led the Army Staff to estimate a loss of 15 percent of Army vehicles in the fiscal year. It limited the rebuilding of the reserve components to about 50 percent of that planned. Finally, it eliminated any equipment modernization for the year.⁴⁹

The Army Rebuilds: Structure and Training

In September 1945, the War Department appointed a special board headed by Lieutenant General Alexander M. Patch to study Army-wide reorganization for peacetime. The Patch Board and then the Simpson Board (for Lieutenant General William H. Simpson) recommended a reorganization of the postwar Army that was implemented under War Department Circular 138. Chief among the changes under Circular 138 were designations of six Army areas within the continental United States under command of Headquarters, Army Ground Forces. Army Ground Forces was the single major command headquarters in the continental United States under the War Department General Staff.⁵⁰

Headquarters, Army Ground Forces became responsible for implementation of postwar War Department objectives and for the first two years after the end of the war labored to execute these directives. During this time, while Army Ground Forces administered the demobilization in bases all over the United States, it was also responsible for basic and unit training, providing replacements for occupation duty in Germany, Japan and other overseas bases, and for the formation, control and readiness of a general reserve force in the United States for use in national emergencies.

Basic training had been reduced to eight weeks in January 1946. Additionally, the training week was reduced to 40 hours per week, with one-half day off on Wednesday and Saturday. Basic training was conducted by a training cadre system at replacement training centers located at Army posts throughout the United States, but because initially many divisions were demobilizing at these same posts, training was frequently disrupted. Morale problems caused by these disruptions at training centers in early 1946 were “almost intolerable.” An inspection conducted by Army Ground Forces in January 1946 at Camp Campbell, Kentucky, revealed a lack of interest in training and a general discontent among soldiers who were close to separation time, many of whom were responsible for training inductees. The transfer of trainers with sufficient time in service to training centers also disrupted the continuity of recruit training. Army leaders recognized that the eight-week basic training cycle was “deficient” and recruits were “just barely trained,” but the replacement demands for overseas occupation necessitated the shortened training cycle.⁵¹

The demand for replacements in the overseas theaters increased as the year progressed, necessitating curtailment of even the eight-week program in November and December 1946. Recruits reported to overseas occupation units with only four weeks’ military training. While this curtailment was temporary and affected a limited number of recruits, it caused repercussions in the field and complaints from overseas commands.⁵²

Army Ground Forces reorganized the replacement training centers in 1946, eventually reducing the number of centers from 16 to four by May 1947.⁵³ In July 1947, the centers were replaced by “training divisions.” The training division structure was similar to replacement training centers and involved no increase in trainers. However,

General Devers had implemented the reorganization because of morale problems among the trainers and because he saw the divisions as a useful structure for mobilization. The divisions which were activated as training divisions were the 4th, 5th and 9th Infantry Divisions and the 3d Armored Division.⁵⁴

General Devers recognized the deficiencies in basic training and directed expansion of the training cycle as soon as conditions permitted. His staff prepared plans for a 13-week cycle, still short of the 17-week cycle conducted during the war, but better than eight weeks. Devers implemented the 13-week basic training cycle in May 1947, at the end of the demobilization period.⁵⁵ However, less than one year later, in April 1948, General Devers was forced to reduce basic training again to eight weeks because an “expansion” program and the adoption of the Selective Service Act of 1948 brought in larger numbers of recruits.⁵⁶ The fluctuation of the basic training cycle, combined with the general lack of adequate unit training, greatly affected the quality of the Army during the period 1945–1950.

Comparison of the eight-week training cycle to the 13-week cycle showed that the most substantial increase was in tactical field training. The expanded period gave the new trainee three times as much field training. In addition, marksmanship training doubled, night training was added, and physical training almost doubled. Finally, new subjects were added, such as rocket launcher and grenade training.⁵⁷ The 13-week cycle produced a better prepared soldier, but due to the lack of sufficient trainers, the training base capacity was unable to handle the influx of new recruits occasioned by the expansion program.

General Devers and later General Mark Clark, Chief of Army Field Forces, suspended all unit training involving live-fire exercises throughout the period 1945 through 1950. During World War II, the Army had developed extensive live-fire exercises, using live ammunition of all types, to train squads, platoons and companies to the danger, sight and sound of battle. Under the title “Battle Indoctrination Training,” four basic exercises involved live service ammunition: 1) an infiltration course with overhead machine gun fire; 2) an overhead artillery fire exercise; 3) a close combat course where units would fire and maneuver; and 4) a combat-in-cities course where flamethrowers and hand-grenades were used.⁵⁸

The rationale for suspending live-fire training was safety. From 1 September 1945 through 1 May 1947, Army Ground Forces units had been directed to suspend live-fire maneuver exercises during demobilization. With the publication of Army Ground Forces Training Memorandum No. 1 on 1 May 1947, Army Ground Forces officially banned live-fire exercises as part of the overall training plan in the United States.⁵⁹ Army Field Forces, the successor organization to Army Ground Forces, continued this practice in 1949 though the updated Training Memorandum No. 1. Live ammunition continued to be used in demonstrations and artillery training, and on known-distance basic marksmanship training ranges. The underlying training philosophy which led to the suspension was that these live-fire exercises had been designed for wartime. During peacetime, safety was the overriding concern. Army leaders did not recognize the connection between live-fire training exercises and combat readiness during peacetime because they assumed there would be train-up time in the event of an emergency. Twelve days after U.S. troops entered combat in Korea, Army Field Forces reinstituted live-fire maneuver exercises.⁶⁰

In September 1945, the War Department directed General Devers to establish a strategic striking force in the continental United States. This force was redesignated the “General Reserve” in November 1945. The General Reserve’s mission was to act as a mobile force capable of reinforcing occupation forces in Europe or Asia and acting as a combat force in either theater. As initially conceived, it consisted of two Army corps headquarters and five divisions and supporting troops. In addition, one corps with two divisions of the General Reserve had to be prepared to discharge missions assigned by the Security Council of the United Nations. General Devers estimated the strength necessary for the General Reserve at 115,000 soldiers. The extreme fluctuations in personnel during 1945–50, as well as reduced Army-wide strength levels, prevented the General Reserve from ever reaching that number. By August 1946, the authorized strength ceiling for the Army limited the size of the General Reserve to two divisions plus air assets and other supporting personnel. The divisions initially designated were the 82d Airborne Division and the 2d Infantry Division. The General Reserve’s mission was also revised to provide for defense of the continental United States and provide mobile reinforcement for Europe or Asia.⁶¹

Even with a two-division General Reserve, General Devers complained to General Eisenhower that he could not meet mission requirements within current strength levels. The General Reserve’s “troop basis” or Table of Organization and Equipment strength was set at 71,000 in June 1947; their authorization was put at 51,000. In fact, as Devers explained to Eisenhower, the actual strength was at 45,000.⁶²

Army Ground Forces’ priorities from 1945 through 1947 were demobilization, operation of replacement training centers, provision of replacements for overseas commands, operation of Army schools, and last, manning and training of General Reserve units.⁶³ While there was perhaps little choice, these priorities contributed to inadequate unit training in the United States. From 1945 to 1947, demobilization and basic training made combat unit training problematic. “The enormous turn-over of personnel,” noted Secretary of the Army Kenneth C. Royall, “made effective unit training virtually impossible.” Royall further observed that the General Reserve, the Army ready force needed for immediate deployment in case of emergencies, could only undertake company or battalion training exercises by consolidating all regimental personnel into one battalion.⁶⁴ The same could be said of the occupation forces in Europe and Japan. The occupation mission of the one division in Germany and four divisions in Japan entailed little or no unit training. The Army divisions in Japan and especially in Germany were essentially providing civil relief operations: food and fertilizer, police activities and general supply needs for refugee assistance. General Eisenhower concluded that the Army in February 1948 was “not ready to respond to an emergency.”⁶⁵

Like training, military doctrine was shaped less by looking to future war than by the last war. Army doctrine, which explained how the Army intended to fight, remained stagnant in the postwar years and reflected successful World War II practices. The 1949 version of the Army’s doctrinal manual, Field Manual 100-5 (*Operations*), changed little from its 1944 predecessor.⁶⁶ Army leaders recognized that atomic weapons could change doctrine, but they did not yet know to what extent. Therefore, they made little change in the doctrine.

The Army school system received high priority during the years 1945–50. This emphasis reflected the widespread recognition among Army leaders such as General

Devers that the prewar school system “saved us” in World War II.⁶⁷ Yet the Army school system also underwent change, capitalizing on the experience of the war. A War Department military education board headed by Lieutenant General Leonard T. Gerow studied the problem and made recommendations that guided the postwar Army education system. An intelligence school and a basic noncommissioned officers school were established for the first time. The school system for officers implemented in 1947 provided basic branch, advanced and specialist schools, as well as the ten-month Command and Staff College program as the pinnacle. In addition, as a result of unification, the Armed Forces Staff College, the National War College and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces were established in 1948 and represented the joint school system. Plans were also made to revive the Army War College, although it was not until August 1950 that this school became the capstone of the Army program. Military participation in advanced civilian schooling was also revived to send promising regular officers to civilian institutions to obtain advanced degrees in a variety of disciplines.

In arguing for continuation of an intensified education system, General Eisenhower noted that leadership in a technological era and the quality of schools were directly related. He further stated that “the future Bradleys, MacArthurs and Marshalls that the United States may some day desperately need, merit the best schooling the country can afford.”⁶⁸

The numbers of soldiers in resident schooling reflected the high priority and emphasis the Army placed on schools. In FY 1948, fully 15 percent of total Army strength—80,000 soldiers—were enrolled in Army resident schools; in 1949, the number rose to 19 percent, or 125,000.⁶⁹ Many more were enrolled in part-time courses, particularly soldiers in the reserve components.

In large measure, the Army school system came through the postwar years reinvigorated and strengthened. Army leaders knew that the school system had been a key factor in strengthening the Army in the years between World Wars I and II, and were determined that it would remain so after World War II. However, the commitment to the school system also had a cost. With regular Army divisions considerably understrength during the postwar years, the high proportion of soldiers enrolled in the school system represented a considerable sacrifice and risk.

“Expansion” of the Army, 1948–1950

As the Cold War deepened in 1947 and 1948 with the communist coup d’etat in Czechoslovakia, problems in Greece and Turkey, and the Berlin blockade, Congress and the administration began to take more interest in a modest defense expansion program. This was first manifested in the FY 1948 Supplemental National Defense Appropriations Bill passed in April 1948. Congress, like many in the defense establishment, saw airpower as the answer to the huge Soviet Army, and appropriated all the supplemental funds to the Air Force.⁷⁰ For the FY 1949 budget (1 July 1948–30 June 1949), however, Congress did increase the Army’s budget by almost one-third over FY 1948, to \$6.02 billion.

Secretary of Defense James Forrestal’s partial rearmament program for FY 1949 proposed increasing Army strength gradually to 12 active divisions and 790,000 men. While Congress continued to view the Air Force as America’s first line of defense, it also

exhibited renewed interest in more traditional forms of military power by granting the Army an increased strength.⁷¹ Additionally, because of the failure to adopt universal military training, the relatively small size of the Army at 538,000, and alarm at the low voluntary enlistment rate, Congress adopted the Selective Service Act of 1948 at the urging of President Truman, Defense Secretary Forrestal and Secretary of the Army Royall.

Signed into law in June 1948, the Selective Service Act authorized conscription for two years. The draft spurred voluntary enlistments, almost doubling the number from the previous year. Army strength climbed. The draft also had a noticeable effect on the reserve components, with the Army National Guard suddenly adding 60,000 men (one-fifth of its strength) in the latter half of 1948.⁷²

With the draft in place, the expansion of the Army began optimistically in July 1948. With the increase in the Army budget, equipping and training spread to include more major unit exercises and expansion of the reserve components. Army strength climbed to 659,000 by June 1949, but it was still far short of the 790,000 level Secretary Royall had projected.

Meanwhile, as a result of unification of the services, the Army began its second major reorganization since the end of World War II. The reorganization was an interim measure, while Congress considered legislation proposed by the Secretary of the Army to make it permanent and to realign its organization with that of the Defense Department. The reorganization strengthened and centralized more authority under the Secretary of the Army and the Army staff. Army Ground Forces changed from a major command to a field operating agency of the Army staff and became Army Field Forces. General Devers, formerly Commander, Army Ground Forces, became Chief, Army Field Forces. General Devers no longer had “command” authority.⁷³

This reorganization adversely affected training at a time when the Army was expanding. It mainly confused ultimate responsibility for training. Total training responsibility had been invested in the commander of Army Ground Forces from 1945 until 1948. Early in 1948, that mission was divided among six numbered area armies. The chief of Army Field Forces retained “supervisory” responsibilities while the director of organization and training on the Army general staff, and the Army Chief of Staff had ultimate responsibility. Until several changes were made in late 1948 and into 1949, there was confusion over the chain of command.⁷⁴ Ultimately, General Mark Clark, who succeeded General Devers as chief of Army Field Forces on 1 October 1948, became responsible to the Army Chief of Staff for all training. These changes came after meetings between General Clark and the Army Chief of Staff, General Joseph L. Collins, in late September 1948.⁷⁵

Basic training expanded in late 1948 and early 1949 to handle the influx of recruits during the expansion period. The number of training divisions doubled to eight and basic training was finally extended to a 14-week cycle in March 1949.⁷⁶ The Army saw these changes as positive developments consistent with the expansion program but were frustrated again by budget cuts for FY 1950.

With the adoption of the Selective Service Act of 1948, the Army staff was ready to build the force back up from the ten active divisions. The plan, actually devised in 1947, was called the “18–25 Division Program.” It called for a phased buildup of the Army and especially the reserve components. Active Army divisions would increase to 12 while

National Guard divisions would be increased from six to 13 over a period of about five years. Although the program would depend on the budget, with the increase in funding for FY 1949, Army planners believed that they could reach the 25-division level.⁷⁷

Typical of Army divisions during the expansion of the Army in the late 1940s was the 2d Infantry Division. In 1948, the division was consolidated at Fort Lewis, Washington, as part of the General Reserve for use in emergencies. A strength report for the 2d Division for July 1948 showed 17,716 men authorized and 8,871 present, a shortage of 50 percent.⁷⁸ That year, Army Field Forces issued a new Table of Organization and Equipment but at the same time issued a “reduction table,” which in effect cut the authorized strength of the infantry division by one-third, to 12,759.⁷⁹ Overseas commands cut out one battalion per regiment under this plan, but the 2d Division kept the complete unit structure by making across-the-board reductions. The increase in the Army budget for FY 1949 aided a climb in the strength. By late 1949, the 2d Infantry Division was near the reduction-table strength of about 12,000 men.

Training in the 2d Division during 1948 was difficult. For a while, the division trained its own recruits during the expansion period. The division supplied training cadres for basic training, which was back up to 14 weeks. Additionally, it supplied training cadres for three separate regimental combat teams at Fort Lewis. With so much of the division’s strength and energy consumed in cadre-led training, it had little time for unit training. The division did manage to conduct four company-size training exercises in Alaska during late 1948. Records at the time indicate that training distractions were so great that the division mission as a combat unit was “impaired.”⁸⁰

In 1949, with increases in the budget, the training tempo picked up as the 2d Division neared full reduction table strength. The training highlight of that year was Operation Miki, a two-regiment divisional amphibious exercise in Hawaii during October 1949. A former battalion commander, later division G-2 (Intelligence) and chief of staff during the Korean War, recalled that the division was “up to strength” and “well trained” at the time of Operation Miki. However, shortly after that operation and because of the slowdown in Army expansion directed by the President, together with the budget cuts for FY 1950, the division experienced a drain in personnel and training funds. The division lost many of its experienced noncommissioned officers and commissioned officers during the months before movement to Korea in July 1950.⁸¹

Military Recession: The Fiscal Year 1950 Budget

The Army received supplemental military authorization funds in April 1949 to aid in the expansion program. President Truman, fearful of inflationary pressures on the economy and desiring a balanced budget for FY 1950 and beyond, directed the services to limit their expansion programs so that the defense budget for FY 1950 would not exceed \$15 billion. A new Secretary of Defense, Louis Johnson, had replaced Forrestal in March 1949, and for the first time the Defense Department submitted a single budget. Forrestal had recommended higher outlays for FY 1950, but he did not enjoy the support or confidence of President Truman by the spring of 1949. Johnson, conversely, eager to support Truman’s budgetary restraint, launched a much publicized economy drive, in which he claimed he could save one billion dollars by cutting waste and duplication.⁸²

President Truman scaled back his initial defense request in the summer of 1949 to a ceiling of \$13 billion. The Republican Congress ignored the President's request and passed a new bill in October 1949 which amounted to \$14.34 billion in obligational authority. President Truman signed the new bill, but impounded the excess funds to keep total expenditures under \$13 billion.⁸³

These budgetary maneuvers took place against a backdrop of increased international tensions. The Berlin Crisis had taken place in the fall of 1948; the explosion of the Soviet Union's first nuclear device and the fall of China to the communists occurred in 1949. However, the debate over the budget failed to produce consensus on the size and composition of the services, the degree of threat the Soviet Union represented, and the allocation of resources for national defense. However, steady increases in the Air Force budget reflected a clear trend that favored airpower.

The reduced defense budget for FY 1950 had far-reaching consequences. The Army budget, at \$4.27 billion, was almost one-third less than it had been for FY 1949 at \$6.02 billion. Although Congress had authorized an endstrength of 667,000, the budget and Secretary of Defense Johnson's economy program cut Army strength to 591,000 by June 1950, down from 651,000 the year before. Also cut were unit field training exercises, procurement and ordnance functions.⁸⁴

The budget cuts for FY 1950 hit the ten active Army divisions particularly hard. Army-wide training funds and personnel priority for FY 1950 had gone to airborne and armor units. For example, the 2d Infantry Division was 5,000 men—45 percent below the authorized strength in the reduction tables—when it was alerted to move to Korea on 9 July 1950. No major training exercises were scheduled for the division in the fiscal year. However, when alerted for movement, the division was quickly brought up to full strength in men and equipment. One former battalion commander, Colonel James W. Edwards, remembered that many of the replacements brought in just prior to movement were soldiers with "sullen and resentful attitudes." Other Army posts had sent their "worst" soldiers to Fort Lewis.⁸⁵

The 2d Division's equipment status upon alert was also deficient. More than 1,000 new items of signal equipment had to be brought in, and 20 percent of the existing equipment was replaced.⁸⁶ Although authorized newer models of equipment by the table of organization and equipment, in 1950 the division was still training with World War II equipment such as the 2.36-inch rocket launcher (bazooka). Between alert and movement, special training teams and equipment were sent to the 2d Division to train personnel in the use of the newer 3.5-inch rocket launcher.⁸⁷

Nevertheless, many leaders in the 2d Division felt they were well trained at the time of deployment. Combat veterans remembered the pre-World War II Army days and compared their own state of readiness in 1950 favorably with that of previous years. Colonel Edwards, a former battalion commander in the 23d Infantry Regiment, felt "the 2d Division in June 1950 was trained to a razor's edge. Members of the 23d Infantry knew that theirs was the best regiment in the best division in the entire U.S. Army."⁸⁸ General Paul F. Freeman, commander of the 23d Infantry in 1950, also thought his regiment "well trained."⁸⁹ In a relative sense, the division leaders thought their units were properly trained to the standards of the era.

The 2d Division's performance in its initial fighting in Korea, however, did not enhance its reputation. The division suffered grievous losses—especially among officers—along the Nakdong River in August 1950. A former platoon leader remembered that “most of the company commanders were first lieutenants. . . . They were forty-year-old, gray-haired World War II combat veterans—and still first lieutenants in 1950.”⁹⁰ At the same time, the 2d Infantry Division's initial combat performance was no better than that of the other Army divisions which had deployed from Japan. Given the division's mission in the General Reserve, one could have expected the unit to perform better than the divisions sent from Japan, which were distracted by occupation duty and operated under the two-battalion-per-regiment system.

In interviews and manuscripts many years after, Korean War veterans generally remember their units as “well trained” before initial combat in the summer of 1950. However, an Army Field Forces observer in Korea in August 1950, in a report to the Army Chief of Staff, noted “units and individuals [were] incompletely trained” and lacked “knowledge of infantry fundamentals.”⁹¹ In fact, from 1948 to 1950 the 2d Division suffered many training deficiencies, most beyond its control. The primary reasons were fluctuations in the strength of the division, training distractions such as the requirement to train basic recruits, and a general lack of unit training funds.

The State of the Army National Guard and Army Reserve, 1945–1950

At the end of World War II, the reserve components did not exist. The Army National Guard divisions that had been mobilized into federal service during the war were no longer recognizable as Guard units. They were indistinguishable from the regular divisions, and had few of the original personnel assigned. As divisions demobilized, National Guardsmen were released as individuals and not as members of units returned to their states. No Organized Reserve Corps units per se were activated during the war; only individuals were activated, and they also were released individually. The end of the war necessitated the wholesale rebuilding of the reserve components, a task not fully completed by the Korean War. In part, the failure to fully rebuild the reserve components by the Korean War resulted from an incomplete and unrealistic understanding of the magnitude of change that had taken place since the end of the war. This was not for lack of trying, however, as the Army staff developed successive plans and multiple studies on the reserve component issue.

General Marshall had established the principle that the reserve components would be reestablished after World War II much as they had existed in the interwar years. Therefore, initial War Department planning projected a National Guard of at least 425,000 and an Organized Reserve Corps of yet unspecified strength.⁹²

During 1945–47, the War Department struggled to rebuild the reserve components and arrive at a realistic and comprehensive policy while undergoing demobilization that disrupted plans for the active Army. The problem of recruiting soldiers for the National Guard—the first line of reserve—was acute. On 1 July 1947, National Guard strength in federally recognized units stood at 86,474—far below the target of 425,000. Because of the large number of World War II veterans available, the Organized Reserve was better off with a strength of 317,000 on the same date.

While Congress did allocate more funds and priority to reserve components from 1947 to 1950, the buildup of the reserves remained slow and painful. For example, although National Guard units had made impressive gains in troop strength by June 1950—due primarily to the enactment of the Selective Service Act—they had only 46 percent of the equipment they were authorized. While reserve component funding also remained a small portion of the total Army budget, the reserve units were equipped with World War II equipment and trained by the active component.

From 1946 to 1950 the Army made great strides in reconstituting the reserve components. By 30 June 1950, over 500,000 Guardsmen and Reservists were organized in units and training part-time on drill pay status. Yet major problems remained. The Organized Reserve was not effectively or realistically organized. Even with reduced manning, shortages of personnel and equipment within units persisted. National Guard units were in better shape but were only half equipped. Many of the problems that active units experienced in training were compounded in the reserve component units. In the final analysis, it still took 18 months to call up, train and deploy two Army National Guard divisions during the Korean War.

Procurement, Modernization, and Research and Development

Procurement of much of the Army's new equipment virtually ceased at the end of World War II. Contracts were either quickly renegotiated for smaller quantities or canceled altogether. The Army did not have a systematic modernization program. The term "procurement" encompassed both the purchase of standard older equipment on a continuous basis and the simultaneous fielding of newer equipment. Nevertheless, Army leaders recognized the need for equipping units with the most modern weapons possible. General Eisenhower warned in 1948 that the Regular Army lacked enough modern weapons and that the Army was in danger of losing its technological edge.⁹³

From 1945 to 1950, the Army remained substantially equipped with World War II weapons and equipment. Until the Korean War, the occupation mission—consuming more than \$2 billion a year—and other budgetary limitations left virtually no money for modern equipment procurement. With the Army awash in World War II leftovers, there was also little incentive for Congress to authorize spending for newer procurement programs. Although there were more modern weapons developed and fielded in the latter stages of World War II, they were not produced or bought in mass quantities. As a result, for example, most armor units remained equipped with the M4 Sherman tank rather than the newer M26. In fact, production of M26 tanks had ceased in 1946. General Eisenhower noted in 1948 that the current supply of modern weapons procured at the close of World War II "was not enough for training and equipping the Army and its civilian components."⁹⁴

In Fiscal Years 1948 and 1949, the Army spent much of its procurement money making and buying fertilizer for occupied areas and on other aid programs for Europe under the Marshall Plan. Procurement funds were specifically diverted to Marshall Plan programs such as the Economic Cooperation Administration, the International Refugee Organization, and the Government and Relief in Occupied Areas organization.⁹⁵ These programs represented a tremendous burden on the Army because of a lack of previous

procurement experience in these areas. The Army began buying fertilizer for the occupied areas in 1946, but demand increased with the Marshall Plan in 1947, and the Army began manufacturing nitrogenous fertilizer instead of ammunition at Army depots. The diversion of procurement funds came at the expense of equipping units with the most modern equipment. The best that the Army could do under the circumstances was to outline a set of short-term priorities to buy newer equipment in the event of emergencies.

There is no evidence of any long- or short-range systematic procurement strategy. As the Army was beset at first with demobilization problems and then burdened with occupation requirements, an Army "modernization" program did not exist.

Much of the Army research and development from 1945 to 1950 centered on guided missile research and atomic energy programs. The War Department Equipment Board, set up in 1945, divided responsibility for development of these items between the Army Air Forces and the Army Ground Forces. The Army Ground Forces, led by General Devers, saw great potential in the use of atomic weapons for tactical purposes and guided missiles as an extension of artillery. These long-range projects consumed a considerable portion of scarce postwar funds. The rationale was that these weapons were of such import since they could act as a significant deterrent to future aggressors.⁹⁶

Particular emphasis was placed on guided missile research and development. The Army Ground Forces and the Ordnance Corps led the way in developing surface-to-surface missiles, capitalizing on the German V-2 development. By 1947, the Army was already testing the variants of the "Corporal" and "Neptune" missiles, which eventually resulted in an array of tactical surface-to-surface missiles capable of carrying nuclear weapons. Additional emphasis was placed on surface-to-air missiles, or antiaircraft guided missiles.

There was some research and development of more conventional tactical items, but these clearly received lower priority than missiles and atomic weapons. Among these were a heavy tank, artillery weapons and newer tactical trucks. Although some effort was expended on completely new items, such as the heavy tank, most centered on designing improvements of existing equipment.

Conclusion

It would be easy to conclude that the Army of June 1950 was a reflection of parsimonious budgets and short-sighted leadership. The truth is more complex. The Army budgets from 1946 to 1950, despite fluctuations of as much as 30 percent, were the highest in peacetime history to that date, and the strength of the Army was the largest ever maintained during periods of peace. Furthermore, the prestige and capability of the leaders of the Army had never been higher, with Generals Eisenhower, Bradley and Collins as successive chiefs of staff. Rather, the complexity of the issues confronting the Army and the nation were such that it would have been difficult for any institution to have weathered these challenges unscathed.

Outside influences played a significant role in those years. The political pressures to demobilize quickly, the failure of Congress to adopt universal military training, the budgetary pressures to keep expenditures low, and the formation of a new defense organization all represented issues that the Army could influence, even though the

ultimate outcomes were beyond Army control. Fluctuating Army budget allocations, in particular, drove force structure changes which greatly inhibited readiness. How the Army responded to these postwar challenges significantly determined the kind of Army that existed at the start of the Korean War in 1950.

Training was the one area in which the Army controlled its destiny. In short, while there were mitigating circumstances, Army training failed to properly prepare soldiers for combat in the years 1945 to 1950. The Army failed by measuring its training not against a latter-day standard but against the standard developed during World War II—a standard Army leaders knew well. When compared to the four-month course during World War II, the two-month basic training course was not sufficient to establish a strong base of trained soldiers. The elimination of live-fire maneuver training robbed soldiers of the degree of readiness needed to transition quickly to combat. And the failure to conduct sufficient unit training exercises ensured significant problems in the opening months of the Korean War.

Essentially, the Army of 1950 was a new Army that bore little resemblance to the Army of 1945. The rebuilding of the new, peacetime Army did not begin until 1948; until that time, the primary postwar missions of the Army were demobilization and occupation duty. Plans for the peacetime Army had been predicated on adoption of universal military training. Only when demobilization was completed and it was recognized that universal military training would not be adopted could the Army finally begin to realistically rebuild.

But what kind of Army did Army leaders want and what were its missions? A new threat was developing with the inauguration of the Cold War, but it proved insufficient as yet to provide a complete focus or direction for the Army. Within the defense establishment and Congress, reliance on airpower rather than on a trained and ready Army seemed to provide the answers. The Air Force consistently won large increases in the budget, particularly for procurement of new weapons. Yet, for all the reliance on the Air Force during this era, airpower failed to stop the North Korean invasion of South Korea during the summer of 1950.

Essentially, Army leaders wanted a miniature version of the World War II Army, but the priorities established—particularly the occupation mission—ensured that the postwar force would never resemble the Army of World War II. Army training and readiness, as reflected in the 2d Division, was fairly low among overall Army priorities, yet the leaders of that unit felt sufficiently well trained. The rebuilding of the new Army was also reflected in the failure to completely rebuild the reserve components. In retrospect, the Army had but two years, from 1948 to 1950, to rebuild for the unforeseen challenge of Korea. Considering the peacetime atmosphere that prevailed, two years was not enough time to arrive at a trained and ready total Army.

Russell Weigley once noted that the Army of 1950 was very much a typical postwar Army, shaped less by looking forward to future war than by looking back at World War II.⁹⁷ This is only partially true. Army research and development began immediately to exploit missile and nuclear technology for future war. But such technology took years of development and did not influence the battlefields of Korea. Weigley is more on the mark when considering modernization and training during this era. Modernization, as we know it today, simply did not exist. The procurement and fielding of more modern weapons was

greatly hindered by budgetary restraints and the surpluses of the past war. So the soldiers of Task Force Smith went into combat in July 1950 with antiquated and worn-out equipment. Training remained patterned after World War II, but it was shorn of its substance.

In one area, Army leaders were eminently successful. They preserved and even strengthened the school system. In the end, the Army school system was the one element which formed the link between the success of World War II and eventual evolution into a more modern and better prepared Army after the tribulations of the Korean War. America's first Cold War Army learned some hard lessons between 1945 and 1950, but those lessons were not fully recognized until the Korean War. American soldiers would pay a heavy price on Korean battlefields for this learning experience.

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